



TRAINING

# ZIDANE

In Association with:



UNDER A LAST MINUTE DRIVE FROM **CHAMPION TITLE CHASING JOCKEY JAMIE SPENCER**, **ZIDANE** CROSSED THE LINE IN A **LAST GASP VICTORY** TO TAKE THIS YEAR'S RENEWAL OF THE STEWARDS CUP, A SIX FURLONG CAVALRY CHARGE OF THE COUNTRY'S **MOST PROLIFIC SPRINT HANDICAPPERS**.



Goodwood 4/8/07 Stewards Cup. Zidane (stripes) wins from Borderlesscott (blue, red stars).

Jamie Spencer said "Zidane stuck to it - I must have been fifteen to twenty lengths off the leaders at half-way and he picked them off one by one. With the ground Zidane made up, he was always going to flatten out a hundred yards from the line, then his guts kicked in and he nailed them right on the lollipop".

Football and Horseracing have a history of complimenting each other, similar to Oysters and Champagne and Bonnie and Clyde. Although the circumstances are obviously quite different, several parallels can be drawn from that of the genius Zinedine Zidane and his sometimes controversial career with that of the equine famed Zidane.

There are some racetrack performers of note that have been named after football heroes, and more recently **Van Nistelrooy** succeeded for the Irish racing might The Magnier's at top international level with a Group 2 win in Ireland and fifth in the American Breeders Cup Juvenile. **Wise Dennis**, named after the former Chelsea mid fielder has been a more than useful campaigner for trainer Alan Jarvis this term and **John Terry** is currently working his way up the handicap ratings obligingly for Sussex based trainer Amanda Perrett.

Like the French footballing hero, "Zidane is a powerful individual who is always exciting to watch when he gallops" comments James

Fanshawe, who has enjoyed a fruitful racing affinity with the speedy family of Zidane together with owner breeders Peter and Jan Hopper.

Zidane's half sister is **Frizzante** who flashed home to land the spoils of the Group 1 July Cup in 2004 and **Firenze** a twice Listed winner and also a half sister, bravely chased **Borderlesscott** for third place in last years Stewards Cup, both who were trained and owned under the Fanshawe/Hopper banner at Pegasus Stables in Newmarket.

**Juliet Bravo**, mother of the trio was also trained under James' keen eye and was retired to stud by her owners. At the time of Zidane's birth his

speedy sisters had yet to set foot on a racecourse and their fame lay in the future, but sadly for The Hoppers they lost Juliet Bravo after she haemorrhaged severely when foaling Zidane.

Little did they imagine what the mare's progeny would achieve, carrying their colours to multiple high profile wins and in hindsight reflecting on Juliet Bravo's value now as a broodmare her death must be a bitter pill to swallow. However, every cloud has a silver lining and the slick bloodline of Juliet Bravo will hopefully continue in the eventual offspring of Frizzante and Firenze.

As a result of Zidane's loss of his mother, a foster mare accepted him and he was reared at a family run stud. Unlike the French midfielder who experienced a tough upbringing in a tower block on a poor estate in Marseille, known for its high suicide rate, Zidane would have received all the care and attention he required in order that he developed into a primed athlete ready for the racecourse. However, the general opinion of bloodstock experts is that orphans do not generally excel on the track, but Zidane displayed an inner resilience from an early age and has certainly gone on to defy this theory.

Zinedine over came early rejection during his footballing career when the Algerian coach deemed him as "too slow" to play for their National squad. On a similar note, although Zidane's connections were aware of the horse's potential they had to remain patient while he took a while to mature physically, as did the whole family. As a result he didn't run as a two year old, at three he began to show blistering speed on the Newmarket gallops and notched a treble of sprint handicaps during his three and four year old term.

However, now in his fifth year Zidane is really coming of age. With an arguably unlucky run in the Wokingham Stakes at Royal Ascot in June, followed by his scintillating win in the Stewards Cup, a stab and win in Group company would

now decadently frost his impressive CV and stamp him as a leading sprint specialist.

The lead up to the Stewards Cup was not without controversy, with Zidane caught in a betting frenzy. The five-year-old had been the long time ante-post favourite for the six-furlong contest when his connections overlooked by mistake attending the draw two days before the race, which saw him allotted the unwanted stall eleven, traditionally not the place to be with recent winners and a drift in the market ensued.

However, on the Friday **Pearly Wey** won the Stewards' Cup consolation race from stall nine, with jockey Philip Robinson bringing him down the now-favoured middle strip. Even after being allocated the stall that no one wanted punters restored their faith in Zidane who was sent of 6-1 favourite, with the oversight turning into a blessing in disguise.

Zidane still had about eight lengths to make up on the brave Borderlesscott with two furlongs to run and it looked as though another placing was the best this latest offspring of Juliet Bravo was going to manage. However, following instructions from the trainer of "Hold up and Go" Jamie Spencer unleashed Zidane who flew from the back of the field to collar Borderlesscott on the line and a breathless Spencer explained afterwards, "This is some horse".

His trainer said: "Both his sisters, Frizzante and Firenze, were placed in this race for us. He just loves to travel with something to aim at. With two furlongs to race, if you'd asked me if I thought he was going to win I'd have been a bit negative. I watched it on the telly and the fellow next door said we'd won".

Before being recently gelded Zidane had a bit of an eye for the fillies and was a handful to deal with at the races and like his foot balling counterpart could display a quick temper. Obviously Zinedine did not have to go to such

LIKE THE FRENCH FOOTBALLING HERO, "ZIDANE IS A **POWERFUL** INDIVIDUAL WHO IS ALWAYS **EXCITING TO WATCH** WHEN HE GALLOPS"

extremes to channel his blinding talent on the pitch! But like a highly tuned athlete, a temperament can be easily ignited when the adrenaline is surging, which can make or break a game or when applied to a thoroughbred win or loose a race.

James Fanshawe comments "Like people, every horse has a different character. A sharp temperament in a horse provides an extra challenge when training them and it's our job to channel this so it works positively at the racecourse. Its harder work but generally pays off as these types are competitive and generally have the guts and determination to win when it comes down to a fight, Zidane is an excellent example and he's certainly focussed more at the races since he has been gelded, which has enabled us to maximise his potential".

Zidane receives regular visits from the Pegasus Stables equine physiotherapist, to soothe away any aches or pains, as his hind quarters tend to get tight when in training. Similar to a football team's infrastructure, visits from a specialist equine physio are a general norm these days for a training establishment and they can play an integral part of priming a thoroughbred to ensure they meet with their race targets in pristine physical condition.

Zinedine Zidane was one of the most skilful and technically gifted players in the game. He could settle and distribute almost any pass thrown in his direction and apply his playmaking skills in any circumstance and make it look effortless.

The racehorse, although still to prove himself within the elite sprinting ranks, certainly exudes a gift of speed, grit and steely determination. His breathtaking win in The Stewards Cup has been marked as one of the most thrilling finishes of this turf season. Zidane under a masterful ride displayed a tremendous turn of foot combined with sheer guts and with not a hint of a head butt in sight.